

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

TANYA LYNN SEHN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

DRAWING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 2001



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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty
of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Final Visual Presentation

submitted by TANYA LYNN SEHN partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art.

The University of Alberta

RELEASE FORM

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DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

GRADUATE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections, University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Fine Arts Thesis Collection:

TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	SIZE
Storm Warning	2001	Oil Paint on Photo	62 ³ / ₈ " x 49"

Insurance Value: \$2,500.00

Printmaking Collection:

Within the Proscenium	2001	Charcoal on Paper	94 ⁵ / ₈ " x 126 "
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Insurance Value: \$7,500.00

Imanihan

Imanihan (e man e han), v. *Assimilacine*. 1. to spiritually acknowledge. 2. to sense or to feel.

In this body of work, I have been exploring themes of gesture, painting as subject, modernist visual cues, the hierarchy of media, technology, life-energy and spirituality. These elements are staged within a two-dimensional framework with the purpose of exploring the interactions between these elements.

Painting

I have been working with paint initially as gesture and looking at 1950's modernist painting. Using these influences, I start drawing gesture marks with paint on plexiglass or acetate. Then, this gesture work is staged and photographed. When I first photographed paint, I came to the realization that the paint itself, and painting in general, had become a major subject matter in the work. By painting on plexiglass, paint became a substance that cast it's own shadow and defined the space between the paint and background. This space has become an active environment where the dancer, the paint and the shadows interact.

Technology/Process

In contemporary visual culture we are surrounded by images that are mainly photographic and computer enhanced, which has distinctly affected how people read images in general. I find that I am often filtering the work through several stages of medium before the work resolves to a final state. First I paint a gesture mark, then it is photographed or photocopied, sometimes edited by computer, reassembled, and then completed by hand-drawing the work. This body of work has been influenced by my undergraduate work and I believe that process has been a direct derivative from my experiences in printmaking. Each time this process is different but my input is controlled to let the initial gesture and the influence of the technology come through the drawing.

Draw

[illegible]

The Figure

My approach to the figure has been to work with gesture in an expressive way. The marks within the images are often given similar importance to the figure. The gesture may occasionally consume the ground and can be read as oppressive. I see the markmaking as an internal force. As the figure exists in this space where the figure does not power or collapse. The figure is partially self-reductive, a reflection of the experience of human existence. The images often embody a sense of spirituality, which I believe is a native heritage. The figure is captured while dancing. Dance is an important aspect of native spiritual culture and the dance in these works mediates the interaction between the figure and the gesture.

Acknowledgements

It is difficult to put an exhibition together like this and not reflect on all of the people who encouraged, fostered and supported me. Thank you.

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Jennifer Bowes
My Family and Friends

A most sincere thank you goes to my husband, Kevin. Your support, understanding, and patience always encouraged me. (Orion and Emmett too.)

Slide List

1	Gesture Armature	2001	Oil Paint on Photograph	62 3/8" x 49"
2	Storm Warning	2001	Oil Paint on Photograph	62 5/8" x 49"
3	Marked Room	2001	Oil Paint on Photograph	43 3/4" x 56 15/16"
4	Commemorative Dance	2001	Charcoal on Paper	99 7/8" x 99 1/2"
5	Gesture Studies I	2000	Coloured Pencil on Paper	25 1/2" x 19 1/2"
6	Gesture Studies II	2000	Coloured Pencil on Paper	25 1/2" x 19 1/2"
7	Gesture Studies III	2000	Coloured Pencil on Paper	25 1/2" x 19 1/2"
8	Gesture Studies IV	2000	Coloured Pencil on Paper	25 1/2" x 19 1/2"
9	Onerous Gesture	2001	Oil Paint on Photograph	63 1/4" x 49"
10	Gesture Analysis	2000	Pencil on Paper	43 3/4" x 34"
11	Surface Tension (left panel)	2001	Ink, Charcoal, and Digital Image	83 1/2" x 67"
12	Surface Tension (central panel)	2001	Ink, Charcoal, and Digital Image	83 1/2" x 67"
13	Surface Tension (right panel)	2001	Ink, Charcoal, and Digital Image	83 1/2" x 67"
14	Vector and Matrix (left panel)	2000	Charcoal on Paper	42" x 64"
15	Vector and Matrix (right panel)	2000	Charcoal on Paper	42" x 64"
16	Within the Proscenium	2001	Charcoal on Paper	94 5/8" x 126"
17	Gesture Decomposition Series (left)	2000	Coloured Pencil on Paper	50" x 38"
18	Gesture Decomposition Series (centre)	2000	Coloured Pencil on Paper	50" x 38"
19	Gesture Decomposition Series (right)	2000	Coloured Pencil on Paper	50" x 38"
20	Plastic Perception	2001	Charcoal on Paper	98" x 99 1/4"
21	Air of Consciousness	2001	Oil Paint on Photograph	62 1/2" x 49 3/4"
22	Containment	2001	Charcoal on Paper	84" x 67 1/4"

digitally imaged

MFA candidate revives images with human touch

By Richard Cairney

In her quest to bring art full circle, to return the importance of the human touch to the visual world, Tanya Sehn has hand drawn approximately 12,000 pixels – those little squares that appear in digitized images when they're blown up beyond an acceptable resolution – in just one of her works of art.

"I try to forget about those things," Sehn said of the painstaking process. She is poised to become the first University of Alberta student to graduate with a MFA degree in drawing. Her thesis show, *Imanhan*, an Assinibon word that means "to acknowledge spiritually," blurs the lines between cold, mechanical images we've become accustomed to and infuses them with the warm touch of a human hand, much of it in a provocatively abstract-expressionist way. The exhibit runs Dec. 4 – 23 at the Fine Arts Building, Gailier.

Photographic images, Sehn observes, have been around for roughly a century but comprise the majority of our visual cues in human communication. With the explosion of technology and graphics software that allows computer-generated images to fool the eye, Sehn is working to reclaim art from the digital and mechanical worlds.

"I am making paint and technology a means to an end," she says of her work, which include huge, hand-drawn charcoal versions of her photos, complete with pixels that have crept into the work as it winds its way from real life, to film, to a digital state and then to paper.

The process itself interestingly embraces the full use of technology. Sehn has produced a series of images that begin with a dancer performing behind a hung sheet of Plexiglas. The artist paints the dancer's gestures onto the Plexiglas, then photographs the dancer and the transparent canvas, casting the shadow of abstract paintings onto the dancer. Sehn



Tanya Sehn

then blows up the image almost to life-size and begins to paint across the work once again.

The result engages viewers on several levels, not the least of which is trying to technically analyze the many layers of the work. Shadows in the photos give the images a 3-D appearance. But overlaid paint suggests it is two dimensional.

"I'm playing with the viewer a bit," Sehn admits.

Almost subconsciously, the emotional strengths of the work begin to emerge. "Spirituality is something that almost seeps through my work. When I first started this work I was thinking of how the spirit evolves out of a person."

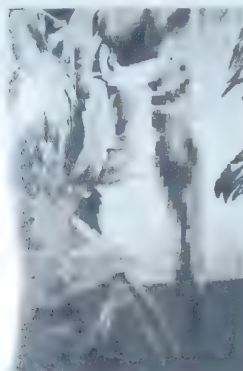
Thus the blurred, almost aural image will evoke more of a feeling of the dancer as opposed to a realistic image. The pieces prompt questions about the dancer's



Detail from *Imanhan*, November 2001. Photo: Photography

back page

spiritual, psychological and social status at the moment she posed for the artist. Some people have suggested to Sehn that the images seem almost violent. But she views it as something more casual. "Some people get caught up in the fact that there is this energy," she said. "But to me it's just something we have around us all the time."



Above: *Dancer II*, 1999, charcoal on paper 163 x 102 cm

Right: A panel from *Imanhan* and *Matrix*



SECTION

E



Saskatchewan's
Tanya Sehn
displays her master
drawings

Visual

Arts / E10



Neil Young rolls new song
based on call from doomed
Sept. 11 flight
Music / E5

ON



Our reviewer takes on
GameCube's new Super Mario
Smash Bros. and a pesky pre-teen
Video / E15

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EDMONTON JOURNAL

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2001

Drawing power

Artist pushes the envelope in impressive works



Gilbert Bouchard
Visual Arts

The first thing that strikes you spending time with Tanya Sehn's artwork is the amazing layers of technique, media and intellect worked into the pieces.

The second thing that hits you as you walk about the impressive collection of art on the main floor of the University of Alberta's Fine Arts Building Gallery is that this multimedia *tour de force* exhibit is a drawing show.

Yes, drawing, that venerable artform most of us associate with sketching, preliminary studies for

paintings or sculptures and other subsidiary artistic foundations. But to Sehn, the art of drawing is a plastic art process with great evocative potential that seldom gets utilized to its fullest.

"I'm certainly pushing the envelope with the medium here, but that's what you should always be doing," says the 30-year-old artist just completing one of the university's first-ever master's degrees in drawing. "You need to question the borders."

A part of her process is to turn



RICK MACWILLIAM THE JOURNAL

Tanya Sehn is finishing one of the University of Alberta's first master's degrees in drawing.

Sometimes Sehn works yet another medium—multimedia. She takes a photocopy of the photograph—which she then partially copies from.

This process also lets her play with the visual borders of the image and abstract gestures as well as the whole ideal of two dimensions in the same space.

"I also love visual puns and like the idea of my drawings showing the various echos of the paint,"

she explains, pointing at one work that shows strokes of paint that have been photographed beside their shadows and complementary slashes of pigment painted onto the photograph itself.

Sehn, a treaty-status Assiniboine from the Saskatoon-based Run with Kettle Band, is also so dedicated to having her show reflect her own search for spirituality, going as far as to use the

Assiniboine word for deep spiritual knowledge as the title for her show.

TEN BEST

THINGS TO DO THIS WEEKEND

E7 / EDITOR: RICHARD HELM, 429-5346; ent@thefjournal.southam.ca

EDMONTON JOURNAL

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2001



Sketching sensation

Drawing, to some, is a process that leads to a painting or a sculpture. But artist Tanya Sehni has decided to create an entire exhibit through drawing by pushing the medium to its full potential in *Imanithan*. Sehni has just completed the University of Alberta's first-ever master's degree in drawing. Also showing at the fab gallery this weekend is an exhibit of works by industrial design student Megan Strickfaden.

When: Today, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, 2 to 5 p.m.

Where: Fine Arts Building Gallery, 1-1 F&B, University of Alberta, 112th Street and 89th Avenue.

Admission: Free.

Information: Call 492-2081.

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